

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 17852 01 OF 03 311652Z

43

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 17852

CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG FOR POLAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: CDU CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

BEGIN SUMMARY: AS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION
CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, SOME OF THE STRAINS
AND TENSIONS WHICH HISTORICALLY HAVE PLAGUED THE PARTY
PERSIST. THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE PARTY'S DISUNITY AND
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PAGE 02 BONN 17852 01 OF 03 311652Z

CONTINUE TO HOBBLE THE UNION IN PREPARING FOR THE 1976

BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS. AT THE SAME TIME THE CDU AND CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KOHL CONTINUE TO MAKE A STRONG SHOWING IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. TO DATE THERE REMAINS DISAGREEMENT IN THE PARTY ON A PROGRAM OR A STRATEGY FOR NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, THERE IS ALMOST A FULL YEAR BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS JUNCTURE TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME WITH ANY DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY

1. THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION SINCE THE FIRST "PARTEITAG" HELD IN GOSLAR ON OCTOBER 20, 1950 HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT TURBULENCE. THE PARTY HAS EXPERIENCED AND SURVIVED THE EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE, ALBEIT OFTEN AUTOCRATIC, LEADERSHIP OF KONRAD ADENAUER, ERHARD'S TRIALS IN TAKING OVER THE REIGNS FROM "DER ALTE," THE GRAND COALITION, THE INTERNAL SPLIT OVER THE EASTERN TREATIES, AND THE 1972 FAILURE AT THE POLLS. AFTER TWO DECADES IN POWER, IT HAS NOW SPENT 6 YEARS IN OPPOSITION.

2. THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ELEMENTS OF TENSION WITHIN THE PARTY: BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT WINGS, BETWEEN THE "SOZIALAUSSCHUESSE" AND THE PRO-BUSINESS WING OF THE PARTY, BETWEEN THE "COLD WARRIORS" AND THE "LIBERALS" AND, OF COURSE, BETWEEN THE CDU AND ITS BAVARIAN SISTER PARTY, THE CSU. SOME OF THESE TENSIONS HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE EFFORT TO FIND A FORMULA THAT WILL RETURN THE PARTY TO POWER.

3. THE RECENT CONTROVERSY BETWEEN SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF AND CSU LEADER STRAUSS, TYPICAL OF MANY CDU INTERNAL BATTLES, WAS VERY MUCH ON THE MINDS OF THE GUESTS ASSEMBLED IN THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-HAUS TO CELEBRATE THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY. KOHL'S BRIEF REMARKS DURING THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ALLUDED TO SOME OF THE RECENT INTERNAL UNION DIFFICULTIES. KOHL WARNED THE PARTY OF THE DANGERS OF "EXPOSING" INTERNAL PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE UNION TO THE PUBLIC ("DIE NABELSCHAU WAR NICHT NOTWENDIG"). HE ALSO CRITICIZED THOSE WHO WORRIED ONLY ABOUT THEIR OWN INTEREST AND NOT ABOUT THE INTEREST OF THE PARTY. IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BONN 17852 01 OF 03 311652Z

CONCLUSION HE CALLED FOR SOLIDARITY AND SAID THAT REASONABLE DISCUSSION WITHIN THE FAMILY COULD LEAD THE UNION PARTIES TO SUCCESS IN THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTION. CDU SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF REMAINED IN THE BACKGROUND DURING THE CEREMONY BUT CSU LEADER STRAUSS WAS VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE.

4. AS THE CDU PASSES ITS QUARTER CENTURY AND FOCUSSES

MORE INTENTLY ON THE UPCOMING ELECTION, IT FACES MANY
HURDLES. THE PARTY IS NOT UNIFIED OR ENTHUSIASTIC AS IT
ENTERS THIS DIFFICULT ELECTION CAMPAIGN. KOHL HAD
BEGUN TO ANNOUNCE THE NAMES OF THE NUCLEUS OF HIS
CAMPAIGN TEAM (STOLTENBERG FOR ECONOMIC POLICY
QUESTIONS AND KATZER FOR SOCIAL POLICY QUESTIONS) BUT
RECENT DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CSU HAVE FORCED HIM TO
DELAY FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS. IN ADDITION, CONSIDERABLE
ENERGY AND MOTION HAVE BEEN WASTED ON INTERNAL PARTY
STRIFE.

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PAGE 01 BONN 17852 02 OF 03 311658Z

43

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 03 BONN 17852

5. THE INTERNAL PARTY DISPUTE REFLECTS PERSONALITY CONFLICTS AS WELL AS PARTY DIFFERENCES. STRAUSS REGARDS BIEDENKOPF WITH DISDAIN AND CONSIDERS HIS ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS CONSIDERABLY LESS USEFUL THAN PRACTICAL POLITICAL EXPERIENCE. BIEDENKOPF FINDS THE CSU LEADER EXCESSIVELY STUBBORN AND DOCTRINAIRE. MORE IMPORTANTLY THE TWO MEN REPRESENT CONFLICTING POLITICAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES. STRAUSS AND HIS SUPPORTERS ASSERT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BONN 17852 02 OF 03 311658Z

THAT THE OPPOSITION CAN WIN ONLY BY HAMMERING CONSTANTLY AT THE GOVERNMENT'S WEAKNESSES AND OFFERING A GENUINE CONSERVATIVE ALTERNATIVE. BIEDENKOPF HAS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE CDU/CSU HAD TO SEEK INDEPENDENT VOTER SUPPORT SINCE THE "HARD CORE" UNION VOTE WAS ONLY 35 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. THE UNION LEADERS RECOGNIZE THAT THEY MUST OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IF THE FDP AND SPD REMAIN IN COALITION; NOBODY UNDERESTIMATES THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS TASK FOR ONLY ONCE SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE FRG HAS A SINGLE PARTY RECEIVED AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

6. THE POTENTIAL FOR INTERNAL DISSENSION HAS INCREASED AS THE CDU HAS BROADENED ITS BASE AND BECOME A "VOLKS-PARTEI." ON THE ONE HAND THE CDU LACKS COHESIVENESS BECAUSE OF INTERNAL DISAGREEMENT ABOUT POLITICAL GOALS AND ON THE OTHER THE PARTY LACKS A LEADER WITH A STRONG ENOUGH PERSONALITY (E.G., ADENAUER) TO BRIDGE THE DIVERSE INTEREST GROUPS. ALL THIS SAID, HOWEVER, THE CDU HAS A LARGER CORE OF LOYAL VOTERS IN THE FRG THAN ANY OTHER POLITICAL PARTY. THIS CAN BE SEEN BY THE PARTY'S PROVEN ABILITY TO OBTAIN ABSOLUTE MAJORITIES IN LAENDER ELECTIONS SUCH AS BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, RHINELAND-PALATINATE AND SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

7. THE HARD CORE OF CDU SYMPATHIZERS AMONG THE GERMAN ELECTORATE CONTRIBUTES TO THE CONSISTENTLY GOOD SHOWING THE CDU MAKES IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. IN ADDITION, CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KOHL'S POPULARITY IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ALSO CONTINUES TO RISE. HIS PERFORMANCE BEFORE THE BUNDESTAG DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE AND HIS HANDLING OF THE MOSCOW VISIT WERE POLITICAL SUCCESSES. THEY HAVE HELPED HIM GAIN IN PUBLIC RECOGNITION, ALTHOUGH HE MAY HAVE SLIPPED SOMEWHAT BY HIS HANDLING OF THE INTERNAL PARTY DEBATE ON THE POLISH AGREEMENTS.

8. THE STRONG SHOWING IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS AND THE

STRING OF VICTORIES IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS OF 1974-75
MAY BE MORE REFLECTIVE OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE
GOVERNMENT COALITION THAN WITH ENTHUSIASM FOR THE
OPPOSITION. THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY INDICA-
TION THAT THE FRG ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL TAKE A
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PAGE 03 BONN 17852 02 OF 03 311658Z

DRAMATIC UPTURN BEFORE NEXT OCTOBER'S ELECTION OR THAT
SUCH AN UPTURN AS MAY OCCUR WILL CUT MATERIALLY INTO
UNEMPLOYMENT. BOTH FACTORS COULD REDOUND TO THE FAVOR
OF THE CDU/CSU AT THE POLLS.

9. THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY FOR THE CDU AS IT CELE-
BRATES THE ANNIVERSARY IS THE LACK OF UNITY ABOUT THE
POLITICAL GOALS OF THE PARTY. THIS IS COMPOUNDED BY
THE DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE CDU AND ITS BAVARIAN
SISTER PARTY. DURING ITS DAYS IN POWER THE PARTY LED
GERMANY OUT OF THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS INTO EUROPE
AND NATO. IT CREATED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FRAME-
WORK FOR THE FRG'S UNPRECEDENTED PROSPERITY. HOWEVER,
THE PARTY HAS NEVER FOUND A COMFORTABLE POSITION IN
DEALING WITH OSTPOLITIK AS IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED IN
THE INTERNAL PARTY DIFFERENCES ABOUT THE POLISH TREATY.
NOR HAS THE PARTY FOUND A FORMULA FOR SLOWING DOWN THE
ESCALATING COSTS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS WITHOUT ALIENATING

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PAGE 01 BONN 17852 03 OF 03 311655Z

43
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 03 OF 03 BONN 17852

LARGE GROUPS OF VOTERS WHO BENEFIT FROM THOSE PROGRAMS.
THE BIEDENKOPF/VON WEIZSAECKER INSPIRED "NEW SOCIAL
QUESTION" PROGRAM IS AN ATTEMPT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH
THIS DILEMMA BUT REMAINS A BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN
THE LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES IN THE CDU AND ANATHEMA
TO THE CSU.

10. THUS THE PARTY'S APPEAL TO THE ELECTORATE AT THIS
TIME, DESPITE THE SLOGAN "ALTERNATIVE '76," IS NOT
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PAGE 02 BONN 17852 03 OF 03 311655Z

REALLY POSITIVE BUT RATHER AN APPEAL TO THOSE VOTERS
DISSATISFIED WITH THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE FRG. TO
BE SUCCESSFUL THE CDU IS COUNTING ON THE GOVERNMENT TO
STUMBLE. THOSE TACTICS MAY PROVE SUCCESSFUL BUT THEY
ARE NOT AS INSPIRING OR COMPELLING AS THE GREAT PROGRAMS
OFFERED BY THE PARTY IN EARLIER YEARS.

11. LOOKING BEYOND NEXT YEAR, CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE
HELMUT KOHL HAS TOLD AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND THAT EVEN
IF THE CDU DOES NOT OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE
1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS, HE BELIEVED THAT A COALITION
WITH THE FDP BEFORE 1980 WERE POSSIBLE. ONE POSSIBILITY
FOR A SWITCH ON THE PART OF THE LIBERALS COULD ARISE IF
FORMER FDP CHAIRMAN SCHEEL WERE TO REQUIRE CDU/CSU
SUPPORT IN THE 1979 "BUNDESVERSAMMLUNG" IN ORDER TO BE
RE-ELECTED AS FEDERAL PRESIDENT.
HILLENBRAND

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